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ABSTRACT

Academic socialization is a process whereby students acquire the competencies necessary to function in the classroom. Academic competencies include not only a high level of proficiency in English, critical thinking skills, and the ability to control the relationship between language and logic, but also social and cultural skills. Although academic performance as measured by standardized tests has enjoyed the attention of researchers, less frequently discussed in the literature are the sociocultural abilities and knowledge required for school success that are obtained through parental mentoring. This paper describes the academic socialization of some Chicano and Anglo high school students in an urban Colorado community, and investigates the process through which they acquired the necessary competencies required to succeed in school. The paper focuses on the way parents function as agents of academic socialization, especially in their role as mentors. Data are presented on three tables. A 40-item list of references is included. (BJV)

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# MINORITY ACHIEVEMENT AND PARENTAL SUPPORT: ACADEMIC RESOCIALIZATION THROUGH MENTORING

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# MINORITY ACHIEVEMENT AND PARENTAL SUPPORT: ACADEMIC RESOCIALIZATION THROUGH MENTORING

Many minority have serious educational problems in American schools. Minority student populations (particularly Blacks and Hispanics) are rapidly becoming the majority in some states and in many large cities such as Detroit, Chicago, New York, Los Angeles, Baltimore, Dallas, and Philadelphia in which student minorities account for 70-90% of all students.

## Introduction: The Problem and this Study

In California, for example, 45% of Hispanics between the 10th and the 12th grades, and 40% before the 10th grade "dropout out." In Los Angeles, two-thirds of the dropouts are Hispanic or Black, and 50% of all 9th graders do not complete high school (U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, 1987). We also hear that by the year 2,000 approximately 1 out of every 3 students will be a minority. There are 13 million children living in poverty (40% of all the poor are children--the largest percentage in the last 30 years), and most of these children are minorities living in the S.E.-S.W. poverty belt. Minorities have the largest, youngest and lowest academically achieving families. And the trend will only continue, since minorities' median age is lower than that of the aging and less fertile mainstream population.

Over 70% of all Hispanic students attend segregated schools (up 15% since 1983), and 63% of Blacks continue to attend segregated schools (down 13% from 1983). Only 2% of all Hispanics ever reach college, and only about 1% graduate from college or enter graduate school. Dropout rates for Blacks and Hispanics are the highest in the country, and range from 40 to 75% of entering high school students.

Academic socialization is a process whereby students acquire the competencies necessary to function in the classroom. Academic competencies include not only high level of proficiency in English, critical thinking skills, and control of the relationship between language and logic, but also social and cultural skills and cultural. While academic performance as measured by standardized tests has enoyed the attention of researchers, the sociocultural abilities and knowledge required for school success--which are obtained through parental mentoring--are less frequently discussed in the literature.

This paper describes the academic socialization of some Chicano and Anglo high school students in La Victoria (a pseudonym), Colorado, and through which they acquired the necessary competencies required to succeed in school. We focus on the parents as agents of academic socialization (especially in their role of mentors).

## Minority Achievement

Failure of students to graduate from high school creates a loss in personal income as well as in governmental revenue (King, 1978; Levin, 1980; Stern, 1985). The actual cost of students dropping out of school far exceeds the investment required to maintain them in public schools (Carnegie Council, 1979). Additionally, some scholars feel that Chicano students who graduate from high school but do not continue their education have lower salaries than their Anglo counterparts, and that Chicano students who stay in school often have less earning power than those who dropout (Stern, 1985). The labor market ceiling alluded by Ogbu (1974, 1978, 1987) may be responsible for preventing minorities from becoming motivated to pursue higher educational goals.

Socioeconomic status, language proficiency, education attainment of parents, cultural factors and ethnic affiliation are often mentioned as factors contributing to Hispanic school attrition (Steinberg, Blinde and Chan, 1982; Walberg, 1984). Chicano students with low English proficiency and low socioeconomic status are more likely to leave school than Black or Anglo students in similar circumstances (Brown, Rosen, Hill and Olivas, 1980; Casas, Furlong, Carranza and Solberg, 1986; Rumberger, 1981; O'Malley and Johnson, 1971; Camp, 1980; and Marem, 1980. A study conducted from 1966 to 1970 among 2,000 boys of varying socioeconomic class, concluded that 23% of boys

from the lowest socioeconomic strata left school, while only 4% from the top strata dropped out (Cook and Alexander, 1980).

Bachman, O'Malley & Johnson (1971); and Cicirelli, (1978) have identified in addition to socioeconomic status, three family characteristics contributing to the high-dropout rates: single-parent families, large number of children, and lack of reading materials in the home. But even keeping these factors under control, Hispanic students continue to leave school at higher rates than their Anglo and Black counterparts (Steinberg, Blinde and Chan, 1982:14). Hispanic student attrition is probably due to additional factors beyond the low socioeconomic status. Other factors related to Hispanic attrition are truancy, negative peer influence, and low expectations on the part of the teachers (Camp, 1980; Carnegie council, 1979; Cervantes and Bernal, 1977; Cook and Alexander, 1980; Fox and Elder, 1980; Laosa, 1977).

These studies, however, have not explained adequately the differential performance among Hispanic students from similar lower socioeconomic class. Furthermore, the literature has not dealt with the role of parents as agents of academic socialization used with the relationships between the family and the school personnel during the process of socialization.

This study revealed different reasons why Hispanic students dropped out of school. Some high achieving students left school for non-academic reasons, others faced academic problems. Yet most of them remained in school and overcame the same obstacles which pushed others out of school therefore. What is it that

makes some students decide to remain in school and others to drop out? One salient factor for those remaining in school was the presence of a mentor (often a parent).

Mentors help students acquire sociocultural skills required to interact effectively with teachers and other school personnel, for example in contexts in which students must inquire, seek information and develop organizational skills to learn. Mentoring as part of the process of academic socialization is similar to the cultural socialization occurring at home: parents transmit knowledge and inculcate values and attitudes deemed essential. Parents can also teach children to view school as a political arena, or as a means to a pragmatic end (get a diploma to get a job), as an unavoidable obligation, or as a challenge and an opportunity. But parents are marginal in the school system and do not acquire a good grasping of its operation, they cannot teach younger children the necessary organizational skills (both cognitive and social) to deal effectively with school demands. There are multiple phases in the process of socialization leading to academic failure which stand in clear contrast with the socialization phases experienced by successful students, regardless of ethnicity and linguistic differences (Kohn, 1983; Sinclair and Ghory, 1987).

In this study, these phases involved family members, peers, school personnel and community groups. In the case of students who failed to stay in school, the process of socialization led them to disenfranchisement and marginality. The complexity of

the process seems to indicate that academic failure is not necessarily the result of lack of ability or motivation. These children learned to feel and act marginal if they are not wanted in school. They learned to seek other rewards outside of the school. Youths showed a number of characteristics which can be interpreted as a preamble to total disengagement from school. To complicate matters more, some students acquired, in the home, the feelings of marginality even before they came in contact with the school.

Although often negative attitudes towards school resulting from inadequate academic socialization present, some students return to school thanks to the intervention of new mentors who help resocialize students for academic success (Delgado-Gaitan, 1986).

## Theoretical Advances: A Socially-based Theory of School Achievement

There have been a number of additional theoretical interdisciplinary developments resulting from fieldbased studies (Trueba, 1983, 1987a, 1987b, in press; Trueba & Delgado-Gaitan, 1988) and dealing with effective interventions by social scientists in schools, and after school hours, with minority children. These interventions have been guided by the work of Vygotsky (1962, 1978) and Neo-Vygotskians (Cole & D'Andrade,

1982; Cole & Scribner, 1974; Cole & Griffin, 1983; Diaz, Moll & Mehan, 1986; Moll, 1986; Wertsch, 1981, 1985; Boggs, 1985; Tharp & Gallimore, in press).

Within a socially-based theory of school achievement, academic failure and/or success are not a personal attribute of the student, but the direct result of structural and psychological contextual factors that permit a child to grow intellectually. Indeed, learning successfully occurs always if a child is given the opportunity to engage in socially meaningful interactions within the Zone of Proximal Development, that is in contextually meaningful activity settings, through "assisted performance" (with the help of others--those in the same social unit). Vygotsky describes assisted performance as the crossroads between learning and cognitive development, whereby "the child performs, through assistance and cooperative activity, at developmental levels quite beyond the individual level of achievement" (Tharp & Gallimore, in press). Students' commitment to engage in learning occurs during the transition from assisted to independent performance, which can be anticipated by the teacher.

Theoretically, Vygotsky's (1978) notion of the "zone of proximal development" plays a key role in understanding the socialization/resocialization phenomena. This notion sheds light on the assessment of students' intellectual abilities and the evaluation of instructional practices (Wertsch, 1985). The

social and cultural basis of knowledge acquisition is predicated on the psychological and sociocultural functions of the family and social group.

Vygotsky explained that, " any function in the child's cultural development appears on the social plane, and then on the psychological plane" (Wertsch, 1981:162). This process has been described as the process of internalization of cognitive and cultural structures, or cultural socialization, whereby the child moves freely between sociocultural activities and mental activities.

The process by which this occurs is the zone of proximal development which Vygotsky defined as, "the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers..." (1978:p.86). The mentor's role in this study was significant in building the awareness and ability of students to deal with the school in a way that allows them to succeed. The relationship between the zone of proximal development and the academic resocialization process through a mentor points to those tasks which students can do with the help of others, in contrast to those they can do alone.

## The Study at La Victoria

La Victoria, a urban community of approximately 17,000 residents in Colorado was selected as the research site. The families were selected through a snowball process. That is, a

key informant in the community volunteered names of families whom she knew through her teacher assistant position in the schools, the Catholic church and community organizations.

The criteria for recommendation included families who had high school students that had dropped out, were high risk or were high achievers.

The members of ten Chicano families, four Anglo families and several individual community members were interviewed at length, in their own homes or workplaces, two or three times, for up to three hours and a minimum of one hour. Two or more ethnographic interviews were conducted with each participant. Other participants included community leaders, school board members, school administrators, teachers and church leaders in the Catholic and Lutheran church in which the families participated. The purpose was to obtain various levels of understanding about the role they played in the education of students in La Victoria and how they viewed the issue of dropouts.

Long term residence in Colorado characterized the majority of these families. Nine of the ten Chicano families interviewed have lived in either La Victoria or other parts of Colorado for several generations. The four Anglo families in the study, resided in La Victoria over 20 years. Table I represents the profile of the families of the dropout and high risk students' families.

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Table 1 about here

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These Chicano and Anglo families varied in family size while employment and marital status characterized the individual student's status in each case where the student had dropped out. Notice that in two of the cases the students had dropped out of school but had continued their education in the alternative school.

Table 2 represents the family profile and educational status of high achieving Chicano and Anglo students. Some of the students were placed in the college preparatory track while others received high grades but were in the basic curriculum track. That track offered only general education classes that did not prepare students to enter college.

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Table 2 about here

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Family size in these families varied such that no real pattern existed in this characteristic. Furthermore, gender needs to be recognized only to make the point that both males and females were identified as successful students in the study.

The 1980 census reports nearly 30% of the La Victoria population is Hispanic. The term Hispanic is the general category used in the census to identify the population of Mexican and/or Spanish origin. The Hispanic families in the study

identify as Chicano or Mexican. The community is said to be generally middle-low income level since more than 12% of the households are run by single women parents who work in skilled labor positions or are unemployed. The majority of the employed Hispanic adults hold operational, technical or service positions (LARASA).

The Victoria School District reported a 50% dropout rate which by their definition meant that 50% of those entering as freshmen dropped out before graduating. The school district was making serious efforts to reduce the high percentage of dropouts. A special task force was established to investigate the problem of dropouts and to propose recommendations to rectify the problem. One of the special programs is the discontinuer transition program which is designed to bring dropout students back to the high school under an individual course of study for completing their high school requirements. While more Hispanic students than Anglo students drop out of school, the discontinuer transition program attracted ten Anglo students and only two Hispanics in its' first year of implementation.

Adequate analysis has not been conducted to determine the reason for these outcomes. The Victoria School District authorities viewed high school dropout as a complex problem that must be handled separately from the regular classroom activities, that is, students who leave school are "problem students" who need alternative programs. Although the administrators interviewed agreed that students drop out for different reasons,

their strategies to correct the problem consist of increasing the accountability of attendance to class and of tracking students into skill classes separate from the regular curriculum. The tendency on the part of school personnel is to consider the dropouts issue as a problem inherent in the students rather than a problem related to the instructional process.

Findings: Developing Social Competence

The La Victoria study showed that the choices to stay in school or discontinue are closely related to the significant mentoring of an adult in the student's life. Although the majority of students indicated that school was actually meaningless, the reality indicated that not all students drop out of school and many of those people who participated in this study believed that the one major reason that they remained in school and were able to overcome severe emotional, academic and social obstacles was because of their relationship to a special person who served as a mentor in their life and their school career. The role of the mentor was one of an individual who, 1) could interpret the school system for them, 2) persistently encourage the student and believe in the student's real ability and 3) was actively involved in the schools to advocate for the student.

The literature defines a mentor in many ways, but usually discusses mentorship in terms of the character of the relationship and the function it serves. A mentor's primary function is to be a parent and peer (DeCoster, and Brown, 1982).

This study showed that the mentor was the strongest indicator of what made a difference between students who chose to stay in and those who dropped out. No significant difference was found between Anglo and Hispanic students with respect to the presence and absence of a mentor. Hispanic and Anglo students who remained in school expressed that they were thankful to the efforts of a significant person who advocated for them at times and pushed them when they did not have the confidence to deal with their daily conflicts.

Parents and students expressed their profound dissatisfaction with the content and the method of instruction which was irrelevant and meaningless in their self-fulfillment. Yet, in spite of their personal or educational obstacles, many Hispanic and Anglo students remain in school and do quite well. The subsequent section presents the concept of mentorship as described by La Victoria students, their families and teachers. The mentor phenomena is convincingly a strong factor cited on the part of successful students as they factor in their choice to stay or drop out of school. It was important to see how the mentor functions was the lives of students.

Three major points pertaining to socialization and resocialization are significant in constructing an overview of the schooling process for the students in La Victoria: 1) the type of socialization in the home toward school, 2) the resocialization intervention and 3) the individual's role in resocialization.

Family Attitudes Toward School

All students are socialized to a particular orientation about school. Students that remained in school throughout their career and achieve well have experienced a great deal of support from their families to stay in school. The explicit and implicit message from home is that the student was important and that the school must avail them every opportunity to learn. This message was conveyed through consistent parental verbal acknowledgement of the values of schooling and through the parents active involvement in their children's schooling.

Active parents differed in socioeconomic level and educational attainment. Some parents in this category had college education while others had dropped out in junior high school. In these families, students learned to deal with school related conflicts because the parents play a strong mentor role. Parents described their persistent interest in their children's schooling as the expected parental behavior. One Anglo parent, Mrs. Baker, related her activities throughout her son's schooling. She had encountered one obstacle after another as she attempted to get the teachers to make a complete assessment of her son's learning abilities when he was labeled "learning disabled". Mrs. Baker was active in her son's schooling since the time he was in elementary school until he graduated from high school. Even after that, she continued to be active as a community member. Her principal form of involvement was in the Parent Teacher Association (PTA). Mrs. Baker felt that in spite of her

involvement in the PTA, she felt totally frustrated and isolated from the school whenever she asked questions about her son's academic performance and their attempts to place him a special education class.

TEXT 1: I don't think as parents that we have a choice on what we have to do to keep our children in school. My son is now in college but it was almost a full-time job to make sure that he got fair treatment at school. It's as if those teachers and administrators felt that students from La Victoria aren't worth much. They also did everything to prevent parents from finding out what they were doing with the students...I went to a meeting where they were discussing my son's placement into a special education class. I was furious because they had not tested him except in one test and that was not enough to prove to me that he was learning handicapped. At the meeting they [the school personnel] were very impatient and rude whenever I asked for an explanation. My son did not belong in a handicapped class. He had a problem with one eye but he was an intelligent boy, not slow. At the meeting they deliberately tried to keep me from participating in the decision and I kept thinking that if that was the way they treated me, an adult who was not going to be intimidated, I can see why students have so many problems in school.

Mrs. Baker's experiences with the school led her to believe that it was necessary for her to intervene in her son's schooling as much as possible. She felt the alienation from not being able to participate in the decision to place her son in a learning handicapped class. The frustration Mrs. Baker faced was two-fold. First, she felt it was unnecessary for her son to be placed in a special class because he was intelligent beyond what the school had assessed. Secondly, her frustration was intensified by the context which prevented her from expressing her views and from understanding the educator's arguments because of their use of specialized language.

This parent's encounter with the educators was representative of the type of conflicts that parents faced in dealing with La Victoria schools. Parents were typically treated as unwelcome guests. This is where the line is drawn between parents who sustained a consistent active relationship with the schools and those who were so discouraged that they gave up trying to communicate with the school. Mrs. Baker's active role in the school on behalf of her son conveyed the message to her son that his schooling was very important and that he was an intelligent person that deserved the best opportunity possible.

Gerald, Mrs. Baker's son felt that he was fortunate that his parents, in particular his mother, tried so hard to help him deal with the schooling process. Because he observed how much time his mother spent in participating in committees and in helping him with his work, Gerald interpreted the parents role in the

socialization process as a symbol of caring. Gerald as well as his mother believed that many students have problems in school because their parents did not care about their children. Contrary to this belief, the data show unequivocally that all parents cared that their children succeed but the fundamental difference is in the extent to which parents feel capable or powerful enough to intervene in the schooling process.

The strong socialization is essentially a mentorship role played by the parents. This direction toward success in school which was established in many families in La Victoria carried an implicit message, that success for these students meant the parents' tenacity in helping the students in the home and getting involved in the schools. The difference between parents who were actively involved in the home and those who were not, indicates that parents who did not actively confront the school felt incompetent and unable to make any changes on behalf of their children. These parents play a supportive role in the home and verbally encourage their children to develop in their studies and to stay in school. Students who had supportive parents at home but have difficulties in dealing with their conflicts in school were oftentimes fortunate enough to find mentors. The mentors intervened in various ways to assist them in coping with conflicts in school. The mentor was instrumental in their resocialization process that helped them to recognize the possible options and solutions to school-related problems.

## Intervention Strategies at Home

Socialization as has been discussed here occurs in the home and pertains to the students' orientation about themselves and their schooling needs. Thus, we can ascertain that if students require a different orientation about themselves and the school, they will need to be resocialized. It is this concept that is presented in this section to interpret the role that adult mentors played in keeping high-risk students in school. Some parents in La Victoria felt that they tried their best to help their children stay in high school. They reminded them to do their work, provided a space to work, and helped them to make decisions about school when necessary. Yet, in spite of these efforts, parents found themselves rather frustrated when their children developed school related conflicts that were unmanageable and eventually caused the students to drop out.

High school students in major conflict with the school often established supportive relationships with significant adults other than their parents. These adults were sometimes alternative school teachers, coaches or community leaders. Students varied in the time periods in which they had serious conflicts with the school. Some students began to feel isolated and confused in junior high school while others began to feel estranged from school in the first two years of high school. This group of students felt disenchanted enough with school that they either considered dropping out or they actually dropped out. An important point is that of those students that these

students eventually returned to school to complete their high school degree. John illustrated of a Hispanic student who had conflicts with a teacher and some peers in his freshman year of high school.

John Valles is the oldest of four children in his family. His younger brother is in junior high school and is having many problems in school because he is bored. The two younger sisters in Kindergarten and in first grade were doing very well because the parents help them to read and support them as much as they can. Although the parents spoke only Spanish at home the children including John, speak both English and Spanish because their schooling has all been in English. John was very active in school sports including track. He also attended weekly teen meetings at St. Mark's Church. Social events were planned by the students that attended and discussions were held by the Catholic Sisters and Brothers.

During his schooling career John was an average student. He received mostly B's and C's on his grade report card during most of his elementary school and junior high school years. As a freshman at La Victoria High School, John had become involved with a peer group that thought it was more fun to cut school than attend classes. One day a teacher refused to let him make-up a test when he was legitimately absent and John went with a group of friends who set fire to a trash can on the school grounds. John was expelled and his parents felt hopeless about what they could do to help their son who seemed to be bored with school and

going astray. His counselor called him in to his office soon after the expulsion and asked him if he wanted to participate in a special program through the local state university. The program involved high risk Hispanic students from the surrounding high schools who received guidance from university counselors about entrance requirements for college, course of study in the high school which would prepare them for college. John and his parents decided to accept the opportunity to participate in the project for the remainder of his high school career. At the time the study was conducted he had been in the mentorship project for one year.

TEXT 2: I've been doing ok. I want to stay in school so I can get a good job. The only way is to keep doing my work, I guess and stay out of trouble.

[To the question on how he would stay out of trouble, John responded:]

I can't listen to my friends like I used to cause some of them don't like school and just keep getting into trouble. I have to start listening to the counselor in school unless he tells me that I don't make it. Then I guess I'll have to keep trying harder.

[John clarified how he would deal with the possibility of having counselors or teachers tell him that he

> cannot make it.] Well I think that I probably wouldn't believe him because I do want to make it. My parents want me to make it and they help me all they can. I know there are some teachers over there [the high school] that keep telling me and my friends we'll never be much but I think I can cause now that other counselor at the college is helping me too but I guess my parents still want me to find different friends so I'm trying.

John depicts the process of resocialization as he describes how he is moving from his involvement with peers who disliked school to working with his counselor and parents to stay in school. John was also facing negative reinforcement from some teachers who wanted John to believe that he was not capable of succeeding. These educators were proven wrong as John began to correct his behavior and engage in his school-work. This is a critical point to note because educators tend to believe that once students begin to pull away from school that their conflict is a permanent condition. Teachers then believe that it is not worth the time and effort to redirect the students' energy. John's case showed that he was interested in doing well but was not receiving the necessary support and guidance that would focus him into the system.

The intervention on the part of the college mentor was the catalyst in redirecting John's goals. John began to understand how it was possible for him to succeed in a place where he was

failing. In John's case the mentor role was played by the counselor at the local college. In the case of other students, the resocialization intervention involved teachers, particularly alternative school teachers. In order for resocialization to function between the mentor and potential dropout, there needs to be a special bond. It is the quality of the bond that leads to the appreciation of school and interest in going to school.

One alternative high school teacher, who was also a parent in the community, spoke candidly about the different types of dropouts and her role as a teacher. There is a notion on the part of educators and some parents that students who drop out of school do so because they have problems which begin at that moment when they drop out. According to this teacher and parent, Mrs. Lopez, various types of dropouts exist.

Some students do not dropout of school. They left school because they are pushed out. That means that the students may have trouble in school and the teachers do not provide the necessary help so the student get bored because they do not understand. Students get tired of waiting around for help. It was easier to leave especially if they have had to put up with this type of treatment for years.

Another type of dropout is the student who decides that they are not going to put up with the humiliation from the teachers. These students left the high school but may return back to school through alternative programs. The alternative school and the General Education Diploma (GED) through night school are types of

alternative programs. Alternative school teachers in La Victoria had a different perspective than the traditional high school teachers about the students' motives for dropping out because they have to teach students who for whatever reason left the traditional school system.

> TEXT 3: Some students leave school because they have financial problems at home and they must help so they take a break from school and maybe return to the regular high school or find another means to get their GED. Other students might want a break from school because they don't know what they want to do so they leave and come back when they decide or they go into the Army and maybe finish up their schooling there.

Mrs. Lopez, an alternative school teacher provided a typology for why students drop out or are pushed out of school. Students who may even be high achievers are likely to leave school if the conditions are not right. That is, if the school did not have the meaning for them that they seek, they are likely to leave even if their grades are good. Implied in Mrs. Lopez comments, the reverse phenomena occurs. Students who may not be getting good grades or doing well in school in general, may actually stay in for as long as they meet the minimum requirements.

As a teacher, Mrs. Lopez feels that students who want to do well in school may not have a chance when uncaring and unprepared teachers do not acknowledge or address the academic needs of the

students. There appears to be a complex set of factors related to school and the family which contribute to the student's decision to stay in or leave school. There is a pressing question which underlies the typology suggested by Mrs. Lopez: "If family and personal problems contribute to some of the students' reasons for leaving school then how can we blame the school for the high dropout rate?" Mrs. Lopez candidly shared her views on this particular question.

> TEXT 4: By the time they get to alternative school, these students have faced so much failure that they hurt. The challenge is greater to help these young people see themselves for the intelligent human beings that they are. You have to let them know that you're judging their work not them. As a teacher, I don't care if my students come in smelly or dirty or however they come in. I'm there to teach them not to judge them. Yes if they are offensive to other students then I'll have a talk with them about hygiene but I'm not going to tell that I won't work them cause they're dirty. If we want them in our classrooms so we can have their minds then we better be able to deal with them bad breath and all just as God made them.

Mrs. Lopez recognized that some students may not be totally conscious of their physical upkeep. However, she felt that once students felt good about themselves and know that they are worth

something then they can deal with those other things which seem to be social obstacles.

There is a message about teaching in Mrs. Lopez statement, that is, teachers do not have to use the students' personal limitations as an academic deterrent. Mrs. Lopez is willing to take students where they are and work with them to expand their learning . Thus a mentor. This is essentially what the role of a mentor is. Mrs. Lopez acts as a teacher/mentor for students in the alternative school. She acknowledges that her responsibility as a teacher includes recognizing the students' full potential and providing them with the maximum opportunity to execute their skills and talents. She believed that the teacher's role meant creating a safe environment in which students could feel competent.

Acceptance is a key aspect of this teacher's responsibility. She knows that she can reach the students by recognizing who they are, their uniqueness, and their needs. She is convinced that most students can perform academic tasks if they have the proper support. Therefore, if students do not have the necessary support in the home or in the high school she, as a teacher can still make it possible for them to learn by providing them special moral, intellectual, academic and human support. Her job as a teacher consisted of becoming a broker between the social milieu (community, school, or home) and the students' peer group. She knew how to stimulate the student in the classroom regardless of their home environment and their previous

experience in schools. A key point here is that this teacher understood that the students' home problems may contribute to their problems in school, but they need not have to interfere with their classroom learning if the teacher is sensitive to their individual needs. To explain attrition we need to examine all factors but we also need to provide opportunity for minority students to be resocialized. They need to begin to see how school is important.

The decision to stay in school or go to school are linked to sociocultural knowledge about schools and value of learning. This is a Vygotskian (1978) notion of learning with the assistance of a knowledgeable person. The essence here is how culture is transmitted in a case where there is a lack of opportunity for marginal students. Academic knowledge is linked to social knowledge. Vygotsky's theory of advanced psychological processes states that the knowledge acquired in a sociocultural context when the learner participates through critical inquiry to get information necessary to make decisions.

## Towards a Resocialization Model

Resocializing students to succeed in school is a lengthy and complex process. This study showed that the mentor played a significant role in teaching students to perform competently in their school setting. Consequently, in La Victoria, the presence or absence of a mentor in the students' lives determined how they dealt with school conflicts. The role of mentor in the various

stages of socialization is complex and difficult. Table 3, Learning to Succeed: Interactional Contexts and Stages of Socialization (next page, adapted from Trueba, 1988:211) shows how much of the process of academic socialization is affected by factors outside of the house. Parents need to regain control of this process and help their children interpret school and street experiences in a way that helps them grow intellectually. The construction of success requires continuous mentoring, guidance, care and organization in the home.

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Table 3 about here

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The role of the mentor must also be understood in its totality rather than in a simplistic manner. In this study mentorship occurred in various forms and patterns throughout a students' schooling, The most important aspect of mentorship is that the student accepts the message conveyed by the mentor, that they are a capable and worthy person that all problems have solutions that can be strategized. The meaning of this message is a powerful source of direction for the students and for this reason it is critical that students have someone to play this role for them throughout their schooling. However, this study indicated that mentors can also make significant impact for students in the resocialization process. If the student did not have consistent support throughout school and has conflicts in school, a strong

possibility exists that a mentor can help the student change his/her direction and choices for their schooling.

This study showed that high school Hispanic and Anglo students face similar serious social, cultural and economic problems over a long period of time. Such experiences influenced their decision to overcome demanding obstacles and stay in school or to drop out. It is important to note that the aspirations, expectations and perceptions which helped to construct a student's choice vary not only among families in La Victoria, but also within the individual families. Diversity exists not only in the type of social and academic problems that students experience but also in the way that they utilize their resources to solve their problem. The variation is explained by the extent to which students are provided the opportunity to learn how to be competent in dealing with school expectations.

Evidence indicates that students do not drop out of school solely as a result of low achievement. Findings in this study confirmed that students are socialized by their families to deal with school. Students who are not taught to understand and deal with the school as a system or whose parents did not know how the system operates experienced more conflict in school. These students were still be able to deal with school related conflicts through the assistance of a mentor. Many of those that are succeeding in school attribute their endurance to the persistent mentorship of a caring and compassionate adult.

A major reason for continuing with school offered by the students was their trusting relationship with mentor. The absence of such a person in the lives of dropouts was cited as a real gap in their support system. The role of the mentor provided the students with means of interpreting the educational system as an objective institution and in a way that showed faith in the ability of the student. Consequently, the demystification of the schooling process assisted the students in braving challenges they face with their teachers, the curriculum and other school academic and social pressures. Mentors manifested students advocacy in various ways including direct intervention with school personnel. Possibly one of the most critical outcomes of the mentors role is providing the students with a model of self determination once they were convinced that their difficulties did not mean that they were personal failures.

If we acknowledge that achievement and social marginality are both learned processes, then we can conceive of a new process of resocialization which mentors can provide. This new process should include well designed programs that include systematic interaction between the school personnel and the members of the family at all levels (Walberg, 1984). This is an initial step in organizing school policy and programs. Possibilities exist for the development of mentorship networks between caring adults and interested students who may be marginal but capable of performing successfully and staying in school.

Another important implication that mentors have for change in the schools is to remind teachers and other school personnel need to systematically maximize the quality of adult support for students all along their educational career. The level of individual attention given to a student by a significant adult who knows the student potential, believes in the student and actively engages the student in their own learning is critical to their learning to be competent.

Further research to examine why some students drop out while others are able to persevere and remain in school, needs to combine ethnographic methodology and intervention strategies. That is, in addition to examining the problem, the researchers need to work closely with school districts to interpret the research data and form collaborative efforts to assist the local setting to establish procedures to resocialize high-risk students to believe in themselves and develop constructive educational goals.

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TABLE 1: CHICANO AND ANGLO DROPOUTS/HIGH RISK STUDENTS

| FAMILY | SEX | # of MEMBERS | STATUS |
|---|---|---|---|
| Salas | M | 3 | working |
| Salas | M | 4 | married, working |
| Vargas | F | 4 | married |
| Avila | M | 9 | 11 (dropping) |
| Reyes | F | 4 | 12th (dropped, returned to alt. school) |
| White | M | 4 | married, working |
| Sands | M | 2 | working |

TABLE 2: CHICANO AND ANGLO HIGH ACHIEVING STUDENTS

| FAMILY | SEX | # of MEMBERS | Yr/Sch. | ACADEMIC TRACK |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Gonzalez | M | 11 | 10th | College Prep. |
| Santos | F | 5 | Comm. Coll | Basic |
| Valles | M | 6 | 9th | Basic |
| Cerda | M | 4 | 11th | College Prep |
| Suarez | F | 3 | 12th | Gifted/College Prep. |
| Baker | M | 3 | graduated | Comm. College |
| Miller | F | 5 | 11th | Basic |

**Table 3**
**Learning to Succeed: Interactional Contexts and Stages of Socialization**

| INTERACTIONAL CONTEXTS | STAGES OF SOCIALIZATION: CONSTRUCTION OF SUCCESS | STAGES OF SOCIALIZATION: OUTCOMES |
|---|---|---|
| COMMUNITY | Community based counseling, legal and mental health services, basic exposure to public institutions (banks, schools, hospitals, etc.) through literacy classes. Message: "America is multicultural and your ethnic community is part of America." | Selective assimilation patterns through active participation in interethnic public activities. Collective presence in various institutional positions and roles. |
| SCHOOL | Use of peer group to reinterpret degradation events and to create a climate of acceptance for cultural differences. Messages: "Minority students belong here and can achieve with peer support." | Acceptance of potential success of minority students on the part of school personnel and peer groups. Increasing influence of interethnic peer groups in support of academic success. |
| HOME | Reach out efforts to help parents become strong school allies. Friendly communication for the purpose of creating a support system for the minority student. Message: "You and your child belong in our school." | Selective adults support for student. Reorganization of home life style to help student engage in academic work and provide emotional support. Knowledge of the function of school and roles of school personnel. |
| SELF | On a one-to-one basis, reinterpret past experiences, overcome impact of degradation events, and engage in learning activities through personal relationships with teachers and peers. Discover actual and potential academic skills. Message: You can succeed if you are willing to seek help." | Redefinition of and acceptance of self. Control over stress and commitment to academic work. Increased cognitive and linguistic skills to articulate abstract thought. Social skills to handle academic problems and engage in learning relationships. |

(Taken from Trueba 1988:221)